

Message Text

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10

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-07

JUSE-00 NSAE-00 SNM-02 TRSE-00 USIA-06 NSC-05 OES-06

OMB-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 SAJ-01 /091 W

----- 076088

R 201012Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6900

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL UDORN

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 2014

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MMOL, PINS, SNAR, LA, INCB, TH, BM

SUBJECT: ALLEGED TRAFFICKING IN OPIUM AND ARMS BY LAO
INSURGENTS

REF A VIENTIANE 1145 (120959Z MAY 76), B STATE 113569 (090408Z
MAY 76, C VIENTIANE 1043 (300955Z APR 76)

SUMMARY. UNFDAC LOCAL DIRECTOR ANAUD SAID THAT LAO HILLTRIBE
INSURGENTS ARE TRADING OPIUM FOR ARMS AND AMMUNITION ON THE
THAI-LAO BORDER, THAT PRC AND BURMESE OPIUM IS TRANSITING LAOS,
AND THAT LAOS ITSELF PRODUCES ABOUT 900 TONS OF OPIUM ANNUALLY.
END SUMMARY.

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1. AT MEETING WITH UNFDAC LOCAL DIRECTOR ARNAUD REQUESTED

WITH EMBOFF AUGUST 19, ARNAUD REITERATED HIS FAMILIAR THEME OF "URGENT" NEED FOR U.S. FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR WHAT HE PERCEIVED AS SINCERE LPDR EFFORTS TO HALT DRUG TRAFFICKING IN AND THROUGH LAOS. HE SPECIFICALLY NOTED LPDR REQUIREMENTS FOR ONE TO TWO HELICOPTERS TO DISRUPT KNOWN OPIUM TRAFFICKING ROUTES. (HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT LPDR EFFORTS TO CONTROL DRUG TRAFFIC COMPLEMENTED ITS EFFORTS TO CONSOLIDATE CONTROL IN REMOTE AREAS.)

2. HE EXPLAINED THAT OPIUM IS THE MEDIUM OF EXCHANGE USED BY THE HILL TRIBE INSURGENTS TO OBTAIN WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION. LAO INSURGENTS ACQUIRE NEW WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION FROM THAILAND. A MAIN POINT OF EXCHANGE OF WEAPONS AND AMMUNITION FOR OPIUM IS AT SANAKHAM ON THE MEKONG RIVER WEST OF VIENTIANE. ARNAUD EXPLAINED THAT THE RUGGED TERRAIN OF THE AREA PREVENTED LPDR FORCES FROM CONTROLLING THE ARMS-FOR-OPIUM TRADE AT SANAKHAM.

3. ARNAUD REPORTED THAT OPIUM SHIPPED THROUGH THIS POINT NOT ONLY COMES FROM MANY AREAS OF LAOS BUT ALSO INCLUDES AT LEAST SOME OF THE 350 TONS OF BURMESE OPIUM WHICH TRANSITS LAOS YEARLY.

4. ARNAUD THOUGHT THAT INCREASED THAI BORDER CONTROL EFFORTS OF RECENT YEARS HAVE DIVERTED OPIUM TRAFFIC FROM BURMA THROUGH LAOS. HE ALSO STATED THAT THE PRC WAS ONE SOURCE OF OPIUM WHICH TRANSITED LAOS. HE IDENTIFIED NAM THA IN NORTHERN LAOS AS AN IMPORTANT JUNCTURE FOR OPIUM TRADE ROUTES ALONG WHICH BURMESE, PRC AND LOCAL LAO PRODUCED OPIUM IS SHIPPED.

5. ARNAUD SAID THAT LPDR OFFICIALS AS WELL AS SOURAS WHOM HE SUSPECTS TO BE OPIUM TRAFFICKERS AGREE THAT PHONG SALY PROVINCE PRODUCES 150 TONS OF OPIUM ANNUALLY. HE NOTED THAT OPIUM PRODUCED IN PHONG SALY IS GENERALLY SHIPPED EASTWARD TO NORTHERN VIET NAM. HE ALSO REPORTED THAT BOTH LPDR OFFICIALS AND THE SUSPECTED TRAFFICKERS SAID THAT CURRENT LAO OPIUM PRODUCTION IS ABOUT 900 TONS A YEAR. LPDR OFFICIALS ADDED THAT KHA TRIBESMEN WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY BEEN UNINVOLVED IN OPIUM PRODUCTION HAD RECENTLY BECOME OPIUM PRODUCERS OF MINOR SIGNIFICANCE.

6. COMMENT: AS WE POINTED OUT IN REF A, ARNAUD'S INFORMATION
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IS LIMITED AND VAGUE AS TO QUANTITIES AND SHOULD BE TREATED WITH CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM AND CAUTION. IN HIS LATEST ESTIMATE THAT "CURRENT LAO PRODUCTION IS ABOUT 900 TONS A YEAR," HE SEEMS TO HAVE MADE A BIG UNEXPLAINED JUMP FROM THE CURRENT ANNUAL OPIUM PRODUCTION ESTIMATE OF 500 TONS THAT HE GAVE US IN MAY AND WE REPORTED IN REF A.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: KelleyW0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
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Margaret P. Grafeld
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04 MAY 2006

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